

**EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

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57 A colour sample 10 for presenting decorative sheet material is made from the sheet material itself and has a number of sections 16 of the material which are normally held within the sample 10 but which can be easily detached from the sample by hand pressure.



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This invention relates to a colour sample for presenting decorative sheet materials.

Decorative sheet materials, in particular plastics laminates, are made with a wide variety of surface finishes. To enable potential users of these materials to select the surface finish and/or colour which they require, it is conventional to prepare small samples (or "chips") of material with each surface finish and to collect together in some way all of these samples so that a potential customer can view all the available surface finishes at one time. All these samples may be mounted side by side on a piece of card or, as is conventional with plastics laminates, they may be banded together with a loop of chain or similar.

According to the present invention, there is provided a colour sample for presenting a decorative sheet material, the sample being made from a single piece of the material and having a plurality of sections which can be detached from the sample by hand pressure.

If a small section of the sample is detachable in this way, then it can be used by an architect or interior designer to affix to a design specification to indicate precisely to the end user what surface finish/colour is proposed.

The detachable sections can be attached to the remainder of the sample by a number of different mechanisms, and the particular mechanism chosen will depend at least to some extent on the nature of the sheet material. In the case of plastics laminates, it is preferred to punch the detachable sections so that the periphery of each section is fractured from the remainder of the sample. This may result in the detachable section being displaced in the direction of the thickness of the material by less than the thickness of the material so that it remains held within the aperture from which it has been fractured.

However other "temporary connection" mechanisms are possible. For example the detachable section may remain temporarily connected to the main area of the sample by means of small bridges of material which are small enough to be broken by hand pressure. In another mechanism, the sample may be locally weakened for example by forming a V-notch or notches part way through the thickness of the material so that an end section of the sample can be snapped off.

The mechanism chosen will depend considerably on the nature of the material of the sample, in particular its ductility. The object is however that the user should be able to detach a small section from the sample, without the use of any tools and to produce a small sample section having reasonably smooth edges.

Each sample section may be printed with information which, for example, identifies the serial number of the colour and the manufacturer, so that this information can also be transferred to a designer's

specification sheet along with the sample section itself.

The colour sample may be provided with means for connecting it as part of a set with other samples.

Preferably there are at least two detachable sections on each sample, and in a particularly preferred embodiment there are four such detachable sections.

The detachable sections are preferably formed inside the boundary of the sample, so that the overall dimensions of the sample do not change when sections have been detached.

Each section may be provided with a self-adhesive coating on the back which will normally be protected by a backing sheet. The backing sheet can be removed when the section is to be attached to a specification sheet or the like.

The invention will now be further described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a first form of a colour sample in accordance with the invention; Figure 2 is a section through the sample of Figure 1 on the lines II-II;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of a second alternative embodiment of the invention;

Figure 4 is a perspective view of a third alternative embodiment of the invention; and

Figure 5 is a perspective view of a fourth alternative embodiment of the invention.

Figure 1 shows a colour sample 10 with a hole 12 by which it can be threaded onto a chain loop in a known manner. The sample 10 has a main area 14 and four detachable sample sections 16. One of the sections 16 is shown already detached from the sample 10. It will be seen that the sample has a boundary area 18 which remains intact even when the sections 16 have been pressed out.

Figure 2 shows, in cross-section, how the sample is prepared. It will be seen from this Figure that the two sections 16 are slightly displaced through the thickness of the material of the sample, and that the sections are fractured from the rest of the material of the sample on fracture lines 22. By striking the upper surface of the sample with a suitably shaped punch, the relatively brittle plastics laminate material can be fractured with only a very small relative displacement between the material of the sections 16 and the surrounding parts 18, 20 of the sample 10. To achieve this accurate fracturing, it is desirable to hold the surrounding areas 18, 20 of the sample 10 firmly whilst a punch strikes the area of the detachable sections 16.

As a result of this configuration, the sections 16 are held firmly in place in the sample 10 by an interference fit between their edges and the edges from which they have been fractured. However it is relatively simply by applying finger pressure to press a section 16 out so that the section 16 can then be used

elsewhere. Typically an interior designer who wants to specify the use of a particular colour of decorative laminate will select the colour he wants to use from a bundle of samples 10 and will then push out one of the sections 16 of that colour and attach it to his specification document. If the front of each section 16 is overprinted with the serial number of that particular material, then there can be no misunderstanding about the nature of the material which has been specified.

Figures 3 and 4 show two alternative mechanisms which may achieve the same end. In Figure 3 a colour sample 110 has two sections 116 which are separated from the remainder of the sample by peripheral slots 124, but are temporarily attached to the sample by means of vestigial bridges 126. The bridges 126 can easily be broken by finger pressure so that a section 116 can be detached. This mechanism is less desirable than that of Figures 1 and 2, particularly for plastics laminates because the pressed-out section will have some raw edges where the bridges 126 have been broken. However for materials which are less brittle than plastics laminates, for example decorative sheet metal panels, the mechanism shown in Figure 3 may have advantages.

Figure 4 shows a further mechanism where a colour sample 210 is of an elongate form and has two end sections 216 each of which can be snapped off from the main area 214 of the sample as a result of the presence of a pre-formed fracture initiation line 228. Figure 5 shows a modification of this mechanism where rounded corners 330 are provided.

The fracture initiation line 228 may be formed by cutting part of the way through the material, by perforating the material or by any other suitable method.

Both the colour sample 110 and 210 shown in Figures 3 and 4 have holes 112, 212 respectively for incorporating the samples into a bundle of similar samples. The samples may however be connected to other samples of different surface finishes by any other suitable method.

Other methods of temporarily attaching sample sections to a sample to allow manual removal will occur to the skilled man, and the alternative embodiments described in this specification are not intended to be exhaustive.

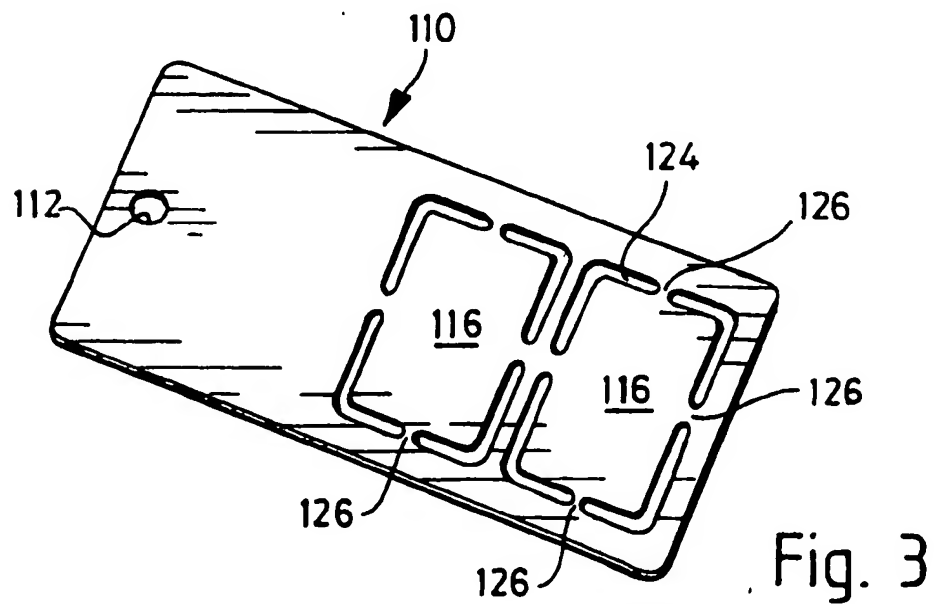
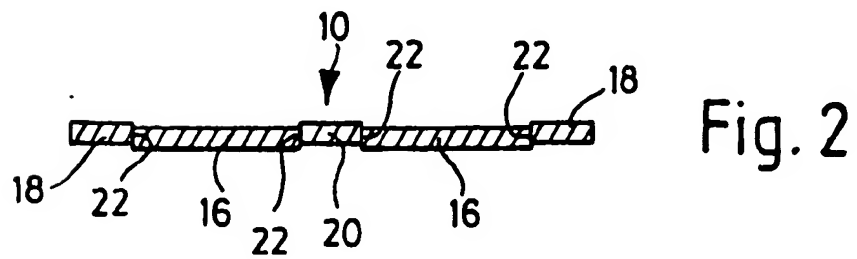
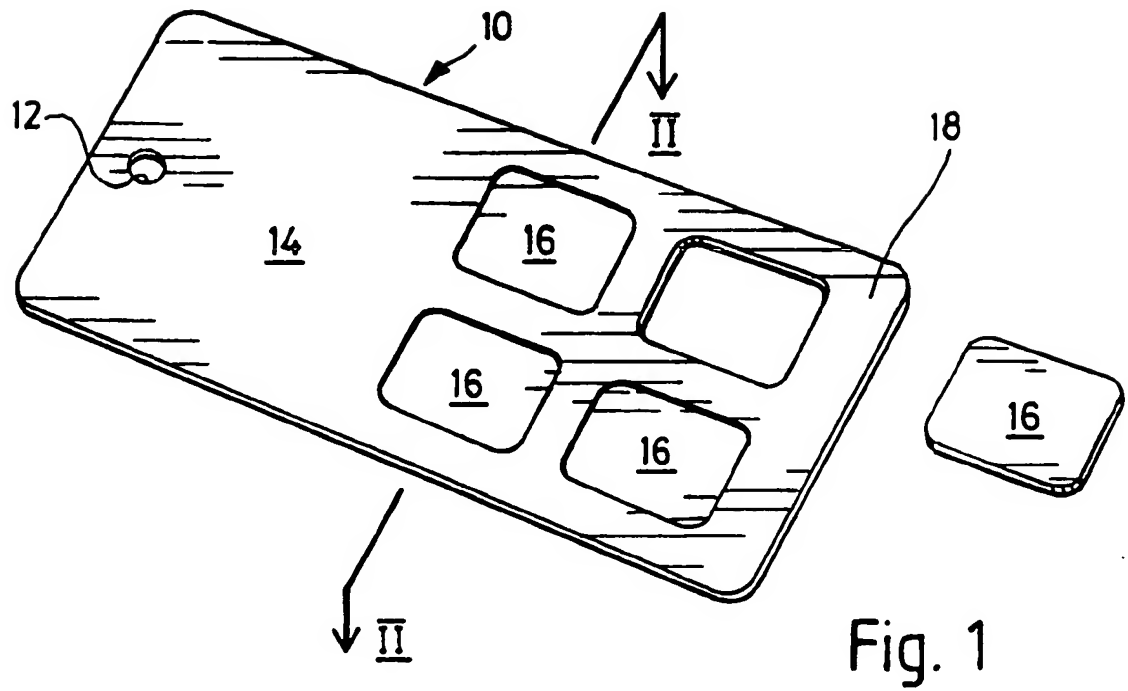
The colour samples described here do however make it easy for designers to specify a particular decorative sheet material; for their customers to see the precise material proposed and for the contractors to be precisely instructed as to the particular manufacturer and the particular grade of material to be used.

piece of the material and having a plurality of sections which can be detached from the sample by hand pressure.

2. A colour sample as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the sheet material is a plastics laminate which is punched so that the periphery of each section is fractured from the remainder of the laminate and the detachable section remains held within the aperture from which it has been fractured.
3. A colour sample as claimed in Claim 2, wherein the detachable section is displaced in the direction of the thickness of the laminate by less than the thickness of the laminate.
4. A colour sample as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the detachable section is temporarily connected to the sample by means of small bridges of material which are small enough to be broken by hand pressure.
5. A colour sample as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the sample is locally weakened so that an end section of the sample can be snapped off.
6. A colour sample as claimed in Claim 5, wherein the sample is locally weakened by forming a V-notch or notches part way through the thickness of the material.
7. A colour sample as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein each sample section is printed with information which identifies the sample.
8. A colour sample as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein there are four detachable sections on each sample.
9. A colour sample as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the detachable sections are formed inside the boundary of the sample.
10. A colour sample as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein each sample section is provided with a self-adhesive coating on the back which will normally be protected by a backing sheet.

## Claims

1. A colour sample for presenting a decorative sheet material, the sample being made from a single



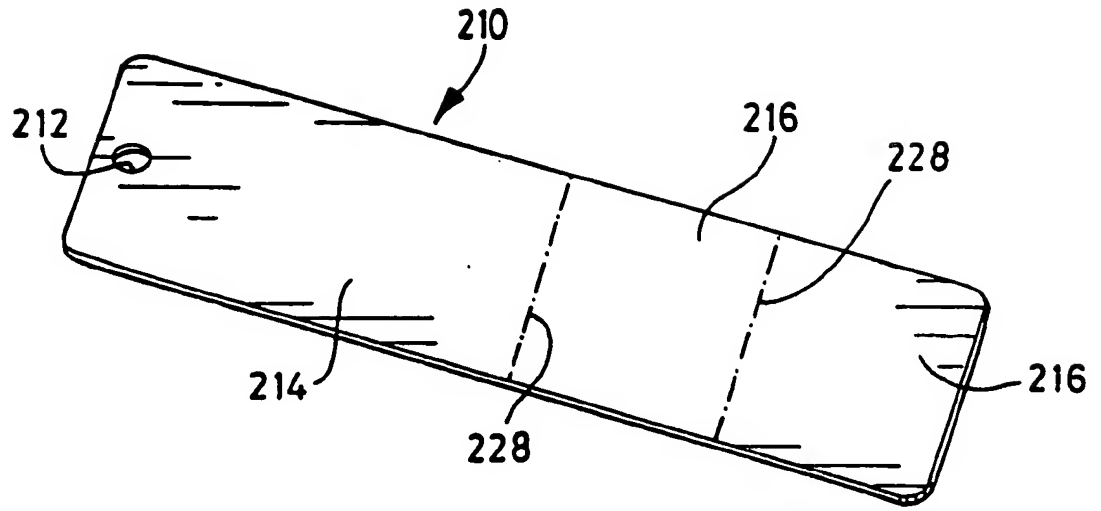


Fig. 4

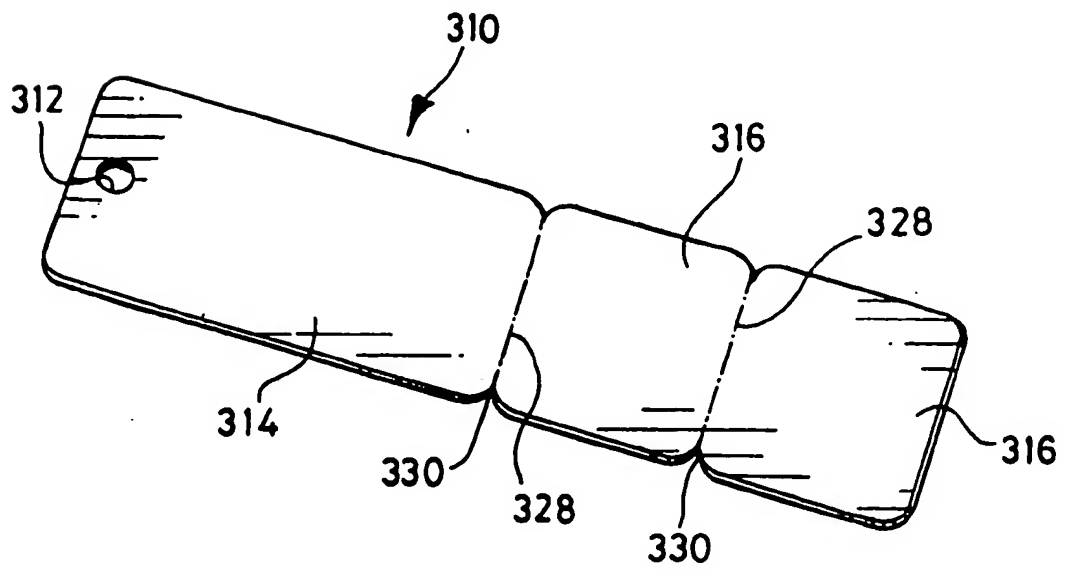


Fig. 5